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AGRICULTURAL SITUATION REVIEW.

Mon., May 7, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

ANNOUNCEMENT: Station \_\_\_\_\_, broadcasting the May AGRICULTURAL SITUATION REVIEW, direct from the U. S. Department of Agriculture at Washington. The REVIEW comes from the Little Blue Book which is issued each month by the Department's Bureau of Agricultural Economics. It summarizes the general crops and farm situation over the country as a whole. Please stand by.

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Once again farm work is delayed by a backward spring season. Farmers will remember that one year ago the country was suffering from prolonged rains which finally resulted in the disastrous Mississippi river flood. This spring, too, there has been a great deal of rain over much of the country. This, coming with severe cold waves, has held field work back and seriously hindered the germination or growth of early crops. Considerable replanting of cotton and corn has been necessary in the South. Southern planters are complaining of a shortage of good cotton seed in many sections.

But luckily, the hard frosts of last month didn't find the fruit buds far enough along to be seriously hurt, except in sections of the Southwest where some damage was done. There was some damage to peaches, pears, and plums in the Central States, the Little Blue Book says, but the apple prospects and the general Southern peach prospects are still good. The same can be said of strawberries and citrus fruits. Last year was a poor fruit year. So far this season, we see a different fruit picture.

A lot of important cash crops are going into the ground at this time. Potatoes seem to be slated for one of the greatest increases in acreage. Growers have reported their intention to plant nearly 12 per cent more than last season's potato acreage. Of course, this increase may not actually occur. But if it does come, and if 1928 is an average growing season, there's real chance of a potato crop big enough to break the market next Fall. This is a good time for potato growers to ponder this possibility.

Good news for stockmen. The livestock industries have closed a favorable marketing period, except in the case of hogs. Beef cattle, dairy, and lamb markets all have done well. The strength of this season's lamb market, in fact, was a surprise to many. The answer seemed to lay largely in three facts: Fact number one, the higher pelt value, reflecting higher wool prices. Fact number two, the decreased number of lambs fed in the East Central States more or less offset the large increases in the West. Fact number three, the large numbers of Western lambs were marketed in an orderly way and no gluts of dressed lambs came about in the big eastern cities where lamb prices most easily make or break.



Hog slaughter was about 25 per cent greater this last winter than during either of the two winters that went before. Packers bought those hogs for about 29 per cent less money than they paid either in 1927 or 1926. That's the story of last year's over-large pig crop. It seems that there's still a heavy total supply of hogs and stored pork in sight for the next six months. By next Fall, though, there's reason to believe that there'll be a more favorable hog situation.

If pig production is somewhat curtailed---- and if the acreages of the chief cash crops aren't overdone--- and if the growing season proves about normal, this season should show favorable results. But upon these three IFS, the outcome this year seems to be mainly conditioned, the Little Blue Book says.

The Nation's agricultural Key Regions again show rather widely differing prospects.

In the East, the Blue Book says, field work is getting slowly under way. Farmers are sowing oats in the north and beginning to get their land ready for later crops. Maple sugar harvest is reported to be not very large this season. Some potatoes are up from New Jersey southward, and preparation of land for other crops is under way. Some reports of frost damage to fruit during April have come in, but the damage reported is not very great. The Blue Book says that there are some winter-damaged wheat, pastures, and meadows, especially young clover and alfalfa, in this section. Spring sales show high prices for dairy cows and also a tendency toward higher prices for heavy horses.

The season is backward in the South. Field work, germination, and growth of planted crops were all retarded by cold, wet weather during April. Mid-April frosts did considerable damage to fruits and tender truck and made it necessary for farmers to replant considerable corn and cotton. Planting work has gone ahead very slowly in the South. Pastures and some crops such as oats and potatoes are in fairly good condition. There's a good supply of moisture in the soil in this section generally, but the crops need warmth and sunshine.

The season is backward in the Corn Belt, too, Department specialists say. Rains, snow, and cold weather last month handicapped Spring field work and seriously retarded oats and wheat. The freeze of April 15 damaged grain and early fruit over a large area. Much winter wheat has been plowed up. Preparations for corn planting are mostly behind schedule, but considerable land is ready for corn now. The run of hogs to market during February and March was the heaviest on record for these two months. Farm sentiment seems to suggest some decrease in pig production this year.

Jumping to the Wheat Belt, we see a similar picture. Spring work has made fair progress in spite of cold and bad weather in the north which held back spring wheat seeding. Winter wheat shows good growth in eastern Nebraska and Kansas. The wheat is jointing in Kansas now. But in western Kansas and southward into Oklahoma and Texas, the grain has suffered from drought and unfavorable winter conditions. Other spring crops: Oats, barley, potatoes, and so on, are mostly planted but have made a slow start due to cold, wet weather.





Cold and backward season in the range country, too, especially throughout the northern parts. Grass is starting slowly, although the stock has been going out on the lower ranges gradually. Sheep shearing is delayed in some sections and some lamb losses are reported from western Colorado. Spring grain and other northern crop work is progressing slowly. Large plantings of sugar beets are reported from the southern irrigated valleys--- also of truck crops, melons, and similar crops. Frost damaged the fruit somewhat in the southern sections of this area. Otherwise, conditions in general are good, as concern livestock, ranges, and crops.

Much April wet weather in the northern sections of the Pacific Coast held back spring work in that area and proved somewhat unfavorable to fruit. Frost has also damaged the fruit to some degree. But the trees generally show a heavy set of fruit in California as well as in Washington and Oregon. Down in the southern parts, the oranges are blooming heavily. California conditions are good, on the whole, and rice and considerable cotton planted and early spring crops showing promising growth.

Only twice--in 1917 and 1925--has the condition of winter wheat been reported on April 1 as low as it was this year, the Blue Book comments. The condition for the United States was given as 68.8 per cent of normal.

By sections, the report shows that the hard red winter wheat in the Plains states was about average, but that the soft red winter wheat, especially in the Ohio valley is in extremely poor condition. Heavy abandonment is indicated. The average United States condition of soft red winter wheat was 55 per cent---- as compared with a 10-year average of 82 per cent.

Hard red winter wheat in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas combined was reported about 1 per cent better, in condition, than the 10-year average. But in Colorado, it was 13 points below average, and it suffered in Illinois, also. Good to excellent was the report on winter wheat in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast States.

The reported April 1 condition of rye, for the country as a whole, was the lowest on record--79.3 per cent of normal. Winter-killing in the Ohio Valley was responsible mainly for the low average condition of this grain although Michigan and Wisconsin also reported poor prospects. However, North Dakota and other important North Central States west of the Mississippi have approximately average prospects for rye.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: In concluding today's AGRICULTURAL SITUATION REVIEW, we want to remind you that the June REVIEW will be broadcast by Station \_\_\_\_\_ on Monday, June 4.

